

THE NEW ENGLAND BLADE

WE AIM TO CUT DOWN ERROR AND ESTABLISH TRUTH.

VOLUME XVII.—NUMBER 33

LEXINGTON, KY., DEC. 15, 1907

Published Weekly.—\$1.50 per Year, in advance

FRENCH

REPUBLIC AND THE VATICAN

Historical Sketch tracing the Passage of France from a Priest Ridden Nation to a Land of Liberty in Fact as well as Name.

LIBERTY THE ONLY DEITY THAT MAKETH DEADLY KNEES

(By John Emerson Roberts.)

In 1902 a certain duke was returning to Paris. The day was Sunday. He stopped in a little country village and entered the chapel to attend mass. Early the chapel was a large warehouse in which six or seven hundred Protestants had assembled for worship. They were singing a hymn. The singing disturbed the worshipful duke at the altar. He went out, placed himself at the head of his armed retainers, fell upon the defenceless worshippers and new two hundred of them, without regard to age or sex, and wounded many. When it had been in progress ten years and the year 1873 had been reached, the Queen Regent of France, tired of the slaughter, weary with the shedding of the blood of her indolent citizens, caused a peace to be declared. When the consummation of that peace was heard in Paris the clerical party was inflamed with indignation. They plotting began, deepened, and was carried forward until on the night of the 24th of August of that year a white man was placed on the door of every one in Paris known to be a Huguenot or a Protestant. At two o'clock the chaste and inviolable sanctuaries of the Prince of Peace, the bells of those temples gave the signal and the massacre of St. Bartholomew began. Paris was crimson with blood. The passion and fanaticism of slaughter spread into the provinces, and the bloody hand of destruction did not stay until more than one hundred thousand people had become the victims of persecution and religious hatred. Until the year 1898, the date of the edict of Nantes, did the work of extermination end, which had begun with the massacre of St. Vaast in the year 1545.

But one thing was possible, but one thing, dramatic, retroactive, poetic thing. Three fifths of the land was possessed by the Crown, the nobles and the clergy. The people, the common people, the people without rights, the people without privileges, the people without justice, were all the burdens. Every thing was taxed. No one was free from extortion. No one held his property, nor even his life, secure. If a peasant youth married a peasant maiden, by their laws and the rights decreed by the feudal lords, was first the possession of the feudal lord. If a man were married in conformity with the rites and rules of the church, had paid all the fees, submitted to all of the formalities, even then he could not marry, for he had not paid until he had seen the bishop and paid an extra fee. This was what Voltaire called a tax upon the honeymoon. But one thing, I say, was possible. Let historians, let apostates say what they may, there was but one thing possible, one inevitable, one tragic retribution. When the States General had assembled in 1789, a farmer representative, a representative from the peasant, the common, the oppressed, the down-trodden of France, said, "If you had burned the title deeds of feudalism forever, the peasants would not now be burning parchment and castle together." "The feudal burdens crush and degrade humanity." "Let us," he said, "burn the privileges that yoke men like beasts of burden and compel them to beat ponds at night in order that the frogs may not disturb the slumbers of their voluptuous lords." One thing and only one thing was possible, and that was what? That was the revolution of 1789. No thoughtful man would think for a moment of apologizing for the excess, the madness, the wildness of those scenes that ensued, but over and against that stands and stains forever this fact, that the revolution was the legitimate, the inescapable, the inevitable result of the coalition between the crown, the nobles and the clergy for the oppression of the common people. It was that slumbering giant that awakened at last; it was that despair breaking into the fury and frenzy of a forlorn hope. It was the rising wind crushed and down-trodden hearts of a remaining spark of life and hope, and the revolution, like an incarnate vengeance half diabolic and half divine, swept altar and throne into the abyss.

One thing happened to the church in France at that time. The national treasury was exhausted. The people were suffering. There was not only misery and privation; there was starvation on every hand; and the general assembly appropriated church property for the benefit of the government and the people. Right there in 1789 the title to the church property of France passed out of the hands of the church. The church was declared schismatic by Rome, and for eleven years, or until the first consulate, Rome made no contributions, offered no aid, to the French church in the erection of buildings, or the accumulation of property. The church buildings belonged to the person who owned the site upon which they stood, to the village, or the province, or the city or person, or the commune. The courts subsequently held those titles good, and they never have been vitiated. It is necessary for us to remember that fact in the face of the events that are transpiring now. When, in 1801, Napoleon, the first consul, made an agreement with the Pope, the famous concordat referred to so often in current dispatches, he did not give back the property to the church.

The agreement provided that the church buildings, presbyteries, parsonages and episcopal residences should be left at the disposal of the Pope, and that, in fee simple. Moreover, Napoleon undertook to nominate all the bishops, and they were to be canonically instituted, after approval by the Pope. But, while these events were transpiring and leading up to the revolution, there is another development, another movement—it is the movement of ideas, the development upon the intellectual side in the life of the French people. Before the revolution there came a great and glorious body of men whose sole purpose was to disseminate knowledge, to afford enlightenment. These men were called the encyclopedists. Let us look at their work. Let us name a few of the illustrious souls. That were the prevalent ideas respecting the world and life, the ideas promulgated by the church? They were respecting man that man was inherently bad, led by nature. That he was helpless. Even if he had power to choose good, he had no will to do it. That was under the wrath and condemnation of God. There was no escape for him except through the instrumentality or mediation of the church. No power of salvation away from the sacraments. The church had taught that the world was all evil and man in order to be wholly and entirely good must live apart from the world. They had preached asceticism. On the contrary, the fundamental hypothesis of the encyclopedists were these: That a man is by nature good, that this world is capable of being made a desirable dwelling place; that the evils of the world result from bad education and bad institutions. That the philosophy, the gospel, if you will, that the present world is under the heart of the ancient dogmatic teachings with which France had been incultured for hundreds of years. The encyclopedists did not attack religion; they did not attack the belief in God, but they did attack belief in miracles, and they did attack the oppression of conscience, as supported by the priestly aristocracy. What they said and the way they said it, as we look upon it now, are absolutely harmless, but that it meant revolution. For example, in their article on agriculture, all they say or attempt is to show the people the limitations, the hardships, the burdens under which agricultural pursuits were followed, the inadequacy of results or returns, and they attempted to point out the cause of those limitations and that inadequacy. In the article on game they set forth the fact that great drives of deer and wild birds are perished to the benefit of certain portions of France, destroying the crops of the peasants, crops upon which sometimes the peasant depended for the life and sustenance of his wife and children, and they point out the fact that if the peasant in defense of the lives of his wife and children is so rash as to shoot a deer or a wild bear, which are the property of the noble and cleric, the peasant will be arrested and condemned to the galleys. In the article upon labor they display a certain enthusiasm for the purposes, the interests and the details of the man who works. This would not seem strange now, but at a time and in an age when labor was a mark, but only of servitude, but of disgrace, when the only man called honorable was the man that could live in idleness upon the unrequited toil of a vassal or a slave to exalt and dignify honor then meant revolution. The definition of journey-

man was this: One who performs labor with his hands and in paid wages. They go on to say that it is the duty of a good government to have primarily in mind the welfare of the journeyman, for, if he be miserable, the nation is miserable. And they say further, under the same head, that net profits equally distributed are better than greater profits distributed unequally, which simply divides society into two classes, one gorged with riches, the other suffering in misery. This was the idea, the scope, of the encyclopedists, and yet, now and then you will read in the current press denunciations of these men of the 18th century, and read statements such as this: That they and their co-workers were subversive of the peace and tranquility of France, and were really the authors of the present agitation. And who are those men? Voltaire was one of them. The man who popularized the philosophy of Newton, and had the distinction of introducing the works of Shakespeare in France. And then there was D'Alembert, Rousseau, Danton, Turgot, Montesquieu, Haller and Condorcet, and indeed every name that helped to make the literature of the 18th century famous and illustrious contributed more or less to the work of the encyclopedists, that work proposed and conducted to a successful issue by the Great Diderot. The last volume of the work was published in the year of the revolution, 1778. It was so promptly condemned that that device of condemnation marked the central point of collision between two ideas. One of those ideas, was this, the absolute elimination of political power from the control and work of shaping opinion. In other words, the absolute secularization of the government. The other idea found its answer and its enunciation in the massacre of St. Bartholomew and in the revocation of the edict of Nantes.

What is the present situation in France, born of its details and across the centuries that are merely transient and local? The issue agitating France at the present moment may be stated like this: Shall the French government be secularized? Shall the state and the church be divorced? Shall the influence and interference of the priesthood, in the affairs of the government, be prohibited? Shall France be governed by Frenchmen or by Italians? Shall she be governed by her own citizens or by aliens? Shall her own people or the Pope, the vicar of Christ? These questions the French Republic is making answers that thrill the heart of every lover of liberty in all the world. Let us see what the government has done. In the first place, it has revised and proceeded to enforce the law of 1801 regulating public meetings. This law is not only impartial, governing all alike, but it is also necessary. It is impartial because there are over six hundred Protestant churches in France, nearly one hundred Jewish churches, all of which come under the provisions of this same law, and none of which have uttered a protest against it. It is necessary because it has been known that that within the heart of a certain element of the Catholic church there were going forward plots and intrigues against the tranquility, the peace and the permanency of the present government. The French government has done this: It has suppressed the grandities and pensions formerly granted to priests and ecclesiastics. Under the agreement between Napoleon and the Pope in 1801, by virtue of certain concessions, the French government in the person of Napoleon, promised to pay the pensions and annuities of the priests, to maintain, to keep in repair the church buildings, and properties, and to erect new ones whenever they were needed. Under this provision the French government has been paying about ten millions of dollars a year for the support of the Catholic priesthood. Now, the French Republic says to the Catholic Church: "You must work or starve; you must support yourself or be unsupported." The principle is this, that the religious system, Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Mohammedan, or called by any name, the religious system that has depended for its support and its perpetuation upon state aid, government support, has no justification whatever for its existence. If it shall develop that the Catholic Church perishes in France without the support of the government all the first place, the government is withdrawing that aid will have received its complete justification. And the government has, in addition, taken over into its own control the material matter of education. Let us go back a little bit. The French Republic was betrayed by Napoleon the Little in 1801. One of the first attacks made by that empire or kingdom or consulate, or whatever one is

THE APPEAL TO FACTS

When Honestly Made Is Fatal to Every Form of Theology and Christianity Must Also Suffer.

ATHEISM IS THE ONLY REFUGE FOR THINKERS.

The New Theology describes itself as "amongst other things, an appeal to facts." This description, however, is true only in part. No theology appeals to facts. It is undeniably true that beliefs, when firm and fervent, create facts, the facts of religious experience; but these are not facts to which any theology can appeal, because in no sense can they be regarded as theological facts. That the New Theologians do appeal to them only shows that the New Theology is a house built upon the sand and is doomed to fall. The facts of religious experience owe existence to certain beliefs which they truth or falsehood of which they have absolutely nothing, either directly or indirectly, to do. There are so many people who believe in a God of love and forgiveness who has revealed himself in Jesus Christ; and if the faith is strong and passionate they enjoy what they call the sweet sense of God's presence in their hearts. Does it never occur to such people that their joyous experience is wholly dependent on their faith? It is reasonable to suppose that, if God and the eternal Christ really existed, they would have dealings only with those who believed in them? It thus follows that there are no facts to which theology can appeal as proofs that its dogmas are true. This applies to all theologies alike.

It is true that the New Theology does appeal to facts, but they are only the facts which prove the Old Theology false. The New Theology, when spoken of by a writer says, "in whether a proposition or doctrine is asked to believe—say, the Virgin Birth, or the physical Resurrection of Jesus—is, de facto, true; and the facts appealed to in such cases, satisfy the generality of New Theologians that the doctrine is true, not de facto, true. But the New Theology is based on the Divine Immanence, a pure dogma in proof of which no acts can be advanced. To thousands of people the doctrine of the Divine Immanence is simply incredible because of the entire absence of all evidence.

We are told that "It is probably our ignorance that makes certain things seem incredible to us." But are we uneducated as a rule, more ignorant than believers? Are the facts of the Universe less known to Atheists than to Theists? The truth is that the majority of our Freethinkers have been driven to unbelief by the light of the facts of the Universe. They have realized that any doctrine of a personal God is to them utterly incredible. In the nature of the case, it is belief, not unbelief, that implies ignorance. But the believer exclaims: "Surely some deference is due to the consensus of experience." Possibly; but we must ask, experience of what? Has anybody ever had experience of God, of the Holy Spirit, or of the next world? Has anybody ever had experience of the soul as distinct from the body? All these are objects the existence of which is assumed without evidence. To speak of the "consensus of experience" in connection with them is like saying that the existence of a single exception, belief precludes experience, and because in the absence of belief there never has been any experience.

The question is being seriously put by many people, it is possible in these days to believe in an Ultimate Authority in religion, and if so, where is it to be found? Catholics say to Protestants: "We have an Ultimate Authority in an infallible Church; you have none." Catholics themselves know how infinitely silly such a claim is. All historians stand up and laugh to scorn. But what say the Protestants? Forgive me if they found their Ultimate Authority in an infallible Bible, to which they always made their final appeal. But criticism has picked innumerable holes in the Holy Scriptures, and the Protestants are anxiously casting about for some other authoritative canon, but as yet with-

out any success. Just now they are at sixes and sevens among themselves. Some of them repudiate the authority of the Bible altogether, and fall back upon the inner light, or what they call the testimony of conscience. Others still cling to the Bible in a sense. They accept it as the Word of God because it has "the testimony of the Holy Spirit." They quote Calvin's Institutes and John Owen's Greater Catechism to the effect that we know the books of the Bible to be the Word of God by the testimony of God's Spirit, working faith in our hearts to close with that heavenly majesty, and clear truth, that shineth in them." Now, this testimony of God's Spirit is said to be the fact we can make our ultimate appeal. No one can know that the Bible is the Word of God unless the Holy Spirit is within him and gives him the information. But surely the man who has the Holy Spirit does not need the Bible. Indeed to write the Bible was a culpable waste of time and of Divine energy, because to all who have not the Holy Spirit the Bible is valueless, and to all who have him, superfluous. On the other hand, if there be a Holy Spirit, who testifies to the truth of Scripture and to the reality of God and the spiritual world, how are we to account for the fact that there are such countless myriads of people from whose hearts he is absent? Some theologians may not be able to adopt Calvin's or Owen's phraseology, but they all accept the essence of the thought. "The implication is," according to one of them, "that man has an innate capacity for the truth of God when he hears it." Then, if there be a God who speaks, how is it that every man does not recognize his voice? Why are there so many who never hear him?

But let us come nearer home. It is asked, "What is the Ultimate Authority in morals?" Theology answers: "Not human law, but a higher and holier ordinance." Here, again, we have an appeal, not to an established fact, but to a belief by no means universal. Theology which contradicts the facts of human life. That the moral law is super-human is a perfectly gratuitous assumption. The moral sense of humanity is the direct result of social evolution reached by a post-mortem process. The moral sense of a low savage is a very different thing from that of a highly civilized European. It is an affair of degrees, and the degrees are determined by the law of evolution. The man who has received, read, but from Nature herself grasped, drunk, expressed." It is what we have gradually picked up and put together on our journeys up wards; and as at present we have but a poor sketch of the moral sense of the journey, the moral law is likely to undergo many more modifications and developments. What, then, is the Ultimate Authority in morals? Our own nature: there is, and can be no other. The moral law is a law of "unwritten law," which they declare to be of Divine origin; but the only "unwritten law" known to us is our own constitution. After all said and done, every reason being in his own mind, every reason being in his own mind, in the last resort we acknowledge no other; and it is quite as true of believers as of un-believers. If my own reason does not compel me to a beneficent conduct, nothing else will or can; and what my reason tells me depends on how it has been trained. A thief is a man who does not believe in the rights of private property, and so he does not hesitate to take your silver and gold. His ethical training has been deficient; and possibly he has received from heredity a low organic quality. Both the honest and the dishonest man are what the law of evolution has made them. On no other ground can our criminal classes be accounted for, their very existence being an unanswerable argument against the existence of a moral governor of the world.

We thus discover that an honest appeal to facts is fatal to every school of theology. If Parker once delivered a series of lectures on the subject, the object of which was to prove that the Universe cannot be accounted for without God, our difficulty, on the contrary, is to account for the Universe, if God exists. The works of a perfect Deity would necessarily partake of his own perfection, but Nature teems with glaring imperfections. Her blunders and blunders are innumerable. It is not at all surprising that, in very desperation, thoughtful divines were driven to the expedient

of inventing the doctrine of the Fall in Eden; and there surely some plausible excuse for Paul's dogmatic assertions that, ever since that dreadful catastrophe, and because of it, the whole creation has been in a state of degradation and debasement, groaning and travelling in unutterable pain and sorrow, and yearning for the God because it has "the testimony of his Spirit." They quote Calvin's Institutes and John Owen's Greater Catechism to the effect that we know the books of the Bible to be the Word of God by the testimony of God's Spirit, working faith in our hearts to close with that heavenly majesty, and clear truth, that shineth in them." Now, this testimony of God's Spirit is said to be the fact we can make our ultimate appeal. No one can know that the Bible is the Word of God unless the Holy Spirit is within him and gives him the information. But surely the man who has the Holy Spirit does not need the Bible. Indeed to write the Bible was a culpable waste of time and of Divine energy, because to all who have not the Holy Spirit the Bible is valueless, and to all who have him, superfluous. On the other hand, if there be a Holy Spirit, who testifies to the truth of Scripture and to the reality of God and the spiritual world, how are we to account for the fact that there are such countless myriads of people from whose hearts he is absent? Some theologians may not be able to adopt Calvin's or Owen's phraseology, but they all accept the essence of the thought. "The implication is," according to one of them, "that man has an innate capacity for the truth of God when he hears it." Then, if there be a God who speaks, how is it that every man does not recognize his voice? Why are there so many who never hear him?

KALI, THE MOTHER

Extract From a Famous Work Entitled The Feminine Idea in Procreation.

(Clipping.) Think not thy life is serious. What is destiny but thy Mother's play? Come, be my play-fellow, meet all happenings merrily. Mournest thou of purpose? Thinkest thou the hell is purgatory, with which thy Mother plays? Knowest thou not that thy hell is a thunderbolt, charged with power to shatter worlds at a turn of arrow? Ask not of plans. It is thy Mother who knows the plan when it is made. The life is serious, thou sayest. When the life is lived, the plan will be revealed. Till then, O child of time, know nothing.

My sport is unerring. For that alone set forth on the day's journey. Think it was for my pleasure, thou comest forth into the world. And for that again when night falls, and my desire is accomplished, I shall take thee to my rest. Ask nothing. Plan nothing. Let my will flow through thee as the ocean through an empty shell. But one thing understand. Not one thing shall be in vain. Not one effort shall fail at last. The dream shall be less, not greater, than the deed. Thou shalt go here and go there as thou wilt, but I shall be there for some petty reason, and thy going shall achieve great ends. Thou shalt meet and talk with many, but some few shall be mine, and with these thou shalt exchange a sign and they shall be thine.

Pain is not different from pleasure if I will both. Rejoice, therefore, when thou comest to the place of tears, and see me smile. At all spots do I keep my trust with men, and for all folk go in my hand, strong, fearless and resolute, when the game is done thou shalt know well, little one, that I, Kali, the Giver of Manhood, the Giver of Womanhood, am thy Mother. Be steadfast in the night I give thee. Weave well the warp into the woof. Shrink from no demand that the task makes of thee. Peel no responsibility. Ask no reward.—(From "Kali, the Mother.")

MATERIALIST ASSOCIATION.

Editor Senan has been sending me his copy of your paper for several weeks. You are making a frigate paper of it. I am trying to help improve People's Press, and also trying to bring together the Materialists. I think there are thousands that I can't reach through People's Press, who would like to belong to Materialist Association if they knew about it. You printed an article of mine a year or more ago that brought me some members. I hope you will print the enclosed also. I am sending copies of it to some of the other free-thought editors.

Are you not a Materialist? If so I should be much pleased to have you become a member of Materialist Association. Do you favor having a "Blue Grass Blade" section of the Association? ELIZA MOWRY BLIVEN, 1st Sec. Materialist Ass'n, Box 76, Brooklyn, Conn.

(Continued on Fourth Page.)

If the preachers would but continue in this strain the orthodox faith would soon be shattered and scattered. The more they turn in the direction of the London preacher the fewer Christians will be found in the land. Speed the good work and let us, as Freethinkers, turn in and give them a boost along the highway.

